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The Use of a Forward Security Zone in Defense
by
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The nature of modern operations, the availability to enemy ground forces large units of a large number of tactical nuclear means, and their high mobility, necessitate establishing a deep forward security zone of operational significance in a defense. In our opinion we should have such zones not only when organizing the defense in advance, but also when going over to the defense during an offensive operation, when in direct contact with the enemy, and under conditions of extremely limited time in which to prepare a defensive operation.

Through skilful selection of lines and conduct of combat operations, a forward security zone can, for a certain length of time, deprive the enemy of the advantages stemming from his possible superiority in tactical nuclear weapons, hamper the massive use of the latter, and create the conditions necessary for destroying the bulk of his tactical nuclear means even prior to his approach to the main defensive zone. In addition, the successful actions of the troops assigned to defend in the forward security zone can contain the enemy offensive, draw his main forces into the battle for this zone, and force him to attack on axes which are disadvantageous to him. It is not out of the question that the defending troops will in that case deliver fire strikes against the attacking enemy on the approaches to the defenses for a longer time and, having worn him out, will weaken the force of the initial strike. The possibility and desirability of establishing a deep forward security zone also is accounted for by the growing mobility of the troops, their capacity for rapidly going over to the defense of advantageous lines, and the long range of the means of destruction, as well as the reliability of the means of control.

Thus, under modern conditions the forward security zone must be established with the aim of preventing the attacker from advancing the bulk of his tactical nuclear means all at once at a range allowing him to deliver massive strikes against the main forces of the defending troops, as well as for purposes of creating favorable conditions for destroying the

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enemy tactical nuclear means of attack, deceiving him regarding the disposition of our main forces in the defense and causing him to deploy his main forces prematurely, containing their offensive and gaining time to prepare a defense, and discovering his groupings and intentions in a timely manner.

It goes without saying that a forward security zone need not be established in all instances and under all conditions of the transition to the defense. The decision to establish it on an operational scale must be made by the front troop commander. If the front is going over to the defense with the forces of one army on an isolated axis, a forward security zone may be established by the decision of the army commander, but in accordance with the concept of the front operation to defeat the enemy on that axis.

This is accounted for by the fact that the front troop commander has at his disposal the bulk of the nuclear means and aviation, with which he can influence the defeat of the advancing deep operational reserves of the enemy, disrupt their regrouping, and, on the basis of the results of the strikes delivered against them, determine which method to employ in conducting the defense, including establishing a forward security zone. In addition, the front troop commander, in establishing a forward security zone, can appraise and estimate the conditions of the situation more fully, specifically: the operational status and combat tasks of the defending army and its adjacent forces; the configuration of the front line; the military-economic significance of the area in which all or part of the front forces go over to the defense; the dispositions of the major targets so that they do not fall in the forward security zone; the nature of the terrain and the availability of favorable lines on which to organize the defense of the main forces, and also the special features of the terrain on which the establishment of the forward security zone is proposed. As to direct organization of the defense of the forward security zone, obviously it will be carried out by the army commander within the limits of the boundaries of his army.

The methods for establishing a forward security zone, and the grouping of forces and means when an army goes over to the defense during a front offensive operation, will be quite varied. In some conditions of the situation this zone may be created from territory seized by forward detachments and advance guards (in this case the main forces go over to the defense on advantageous lines in the depth), and in others by consolidating the line reached and leaving on it the minimum number of forces and means required, at the same time as the main forces of the army first-echelon

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large units move into the depth to a line which will be advantageous for defense. The zone also may be established by moving the necessary number of forces forward from the complement of the army first echelon as soon as the task is received to go over to the defense on the line reached. Depending on the situation, it is quite probable that these methods for establishing a forward security zone may be combined.

The task to prepare a forward security zone is given by the army commander at the same time as the tasks for defense are allocated to the divisions. The number of forces and means assigned to the defense of the forward security zone will depend on the composition of the army, the combat effectiveness of the large units, the combat task, the specific conditions of the situation, and the methods of establishing the forward security zone.

On the main axis, a tank or motorized rifle division located ahead of the designated forward edge of the battle area, may be assigned to conduct combat operations in the forward security zone. Research has shown that a division can conduct successful battles in the forward security zone on a 50 to 60-kilometer front, i.e., intercept the offensive zone of the enemy army corps operating on the axis of the main strike of the field army. Forward detachments sent out from the first-echelon division may operate on other axes; these detachments may consist of a motorized rifle or tank battalion or, in certain cases, regiments, as practiced in the DNEPR exercise. The remainder of the forward security zone may be covered by reconnaissance subunits and various types of obstacles.

The number and composition of the forward detachments assigned from each division of the army first-echelon will be determined by their task, the anticipated composition and strength of the enemy forward attacking units, the nature of the terrain, and other conditions of the situation. The forward detachments, consisting of a motorized rifle (tank) regiment, can defend a 15 to 20-kilometer-wide sector in the forward security zone, and a reinforced motorized rifle (tank) battalion can defend a six to eight-kilometer area along the front. We know that US and West German divisions move out toward the defensive line they are supposed to break through by several routes, in a 20 to 30-kilometer-wide zone, having in front of them reconnaissance and covering troops which include reinforced motorized infantry and tank battalions. A regimental strength forward detachment can successfully repulse the attempts of these troops to penetrate to the forward edge of the battle area and force the main forces of the enemy divisions to deploy in the forward security zone.

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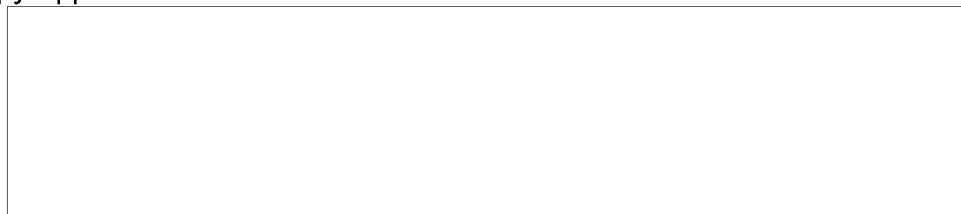
The use of forward detachments to defend a forward security zone was widely practiced in the defensive operations of World War II. The nature of the tasks they performed and their operating methods also are of interest for modern conditions. We will take as an example the defensive actions of troops of the 21st Army of the Southwest Front in November 1941 at Belgorod.* The large units of this army, having broken contact with the enemy during withdrawal, on 3 November went over to the defense on the Koroch-Novoselovka line (east and northeast of Belgorod). The army did not have close contact with the enemy. To wear out the enemy forward units and ensure the defense was organized and prepared by the main forces, forward detachments composed of up to a reinforced regiment were sent out from the first-echelon divisions to a distance of 35 to 50 kilometers from the main forces. Operating in a 10 to 18-kilometer-wide zone along the front on several successively occupied lines, they contained the offensive of the superior enemy forces for four days, which permitted the army to make an orderly transition to the defense and carry out the necessary engineer work.

In subsequent World War II operations, forward detachments were sent out more often for actions in the forward security zone, and their composition, distance and the duration of combat operations conducted were quite varied. Thus, by the time of the defensive engagements at Stalingrad the composition of the forward detachments included tanks and artillery (see chart).

In the examples stated, the forward detachments operated independently, without the fire support of the main forces defending the main defensive zone, and successfully completed their tasks. In modern operations in which entire motorized rifle and tank regiments are assigned to the forward security zone from first-echelon divisions, it is all the more probable that they will be given complex tasks, as indicated earlier.

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*Archives of the Ministry of Defense, file 315, work 2648, Top Secret, volume 93, pages 109-112

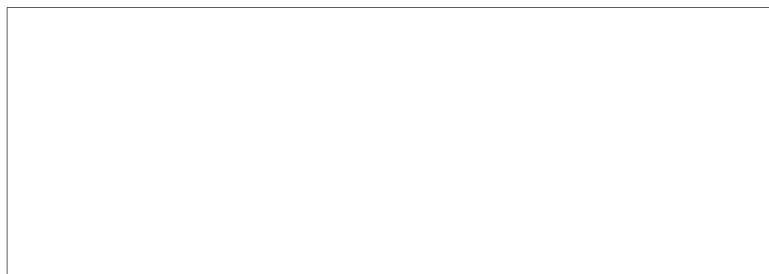


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| Divisions from which forward detachments sent | Line on which forward detachments initiated battle, and its distance from the main forces defenses | Composition of forward detachments | Duration of conduct of combat operations |
|---|--|--|--|
| 192nd Rifle Division | Pronin, 50 kms | Rifle regiment, separate tank battalion, artillery battalion | 18-23 July |
| 33rd Guards Rifle Division | Chernyshevskaya, 40 kms | Rifle regiment, separate tank battalion, artillery battalion | 17-23 July |
| 147th Motorized Rifle Division | Morozovskiy, 60 kms | Rifle regiment, tank company | 19-23 July |

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The depth of the forward security zone on the army main axis must allow conducting combat operations on two or three successively occupied lines, creating the conditions for wide movement and, particularly important, preventing the use of tactical nuclear weapons against the main forces of the defending troops by engaging the enemy in battle for the forward security zone. We think these requirements may be met by a depth on the order of 30 to 50 kilometers. On those axes where battalion-size forward detachments are operating, the depth of the zone may be less in order to ensure their support by the fire means of the main forces of the divisions and prevent the enemy from outflanking the lines the detachments are occupying.

The depth of the forward security zone must allow the defending units to conduct active combat operations which would force the enemy strike groupings to deploy at a great distance from the army forward edge of the battle area and expend a considerable part of their munitions, including nuclear. In addition, troop actions in the forward security zone must force the enemy to condense his combat dispositions, reduce the momentum of attack and, by the same token create favorable conditions for the defending forces to inflict losses on the attacking enemy with all means of destruction, especially missile/nuclear weapons.

To achieve this goal the front (army) commander predesignates the zones for destroying the enemy troops which they are moving out and in battle in the forward security zone. Areas of destruction where the enemy actions can be restricted or his movement slowed, such as narrows, defiles, crossings of water obstacles, mountain gaps and passes, etc., are indicated on the terrain. Strikes are planned against these areas, and various types of engineer obstacles are widely used here.

In order to inflict heavy losses on the attacking enemy in the forward security zone, sometimes it will be advantageous to move part of the artillery from the main forces onto temporary fire positions there. In addition, the troops operating in the forward security zone may be reinforced by the forces and means of combat with enemy radioelectronic means so that, as the enemy main control posts and communications system are deployed and activated, his radioelectronic means will be neutralized by jamming and his control disrupted.

While operating in a forward security zone a division (regiment) concentrates its main efforts by axes, one of which is the main one. The uniform distribution of forces and means and the tendency to create a continuous front of defense in the forward security zone cannot be

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tolerated. The main roads and other axes most favorable to enemy armored troop actions must be firmly intercepted on the defensive lines.

It is desirable to have the combat structure of a division in one echelon with one motorized rifle (tank) regiment allocated as reserve. Its artillery, as a rule, should be sent to reinforce the regiments of the first echelon. It is hardly desirable to create a divisional artillery group. Motorized rifle regiments use the bulk of their tanks to reinforce the antitank defense of the subunits, locating them in company and platoon strongpoints, and also to operate from ambushes.

It likewise is desirable to have the combat structure of the forward detachments composed of a motorized rifle (tank) regiment (battalion) into one echelon by company and separate platoon strongpoints, with allocation of a reserve in the strength of up to a motorized rifle (tank) company (platoons) reinforced by antitank means. Artillery attached to a forward detachment is used in a centralized manner. The bulk of it is deployed behind the company positions on the tank-threatened axis, and the rest in the depth behind the position to which the detachment will withdraw during battle, but set up so it can support the battle of the forward detachment on the first position.

The basic operating method of the units and subunits in the forward security zone is the surprise artillery strike to inflict the maximum losses on the enemy, and then hold the most important areas intercepting the main axes of possible enemy breakout toward the forward edge of the battle area. The distance between the successively occupied positions is determined on the basis of existing favorable natural lines, and for the purpose of ensuring that the subunits (units) disengage, withdraw and occupy positions on a new line. Intervals of 3 to 5 kilometers are allowed for a battalion-strength forward detachment, and 5 to 8 kilometers for a regiment.

The units and subunits in the forward security zone must stubbornly defend the occupied lines, in order to contain the attacking enemy for a longer time and to be able to rapidly disengage, break contact with the enemy, and occupy the next line, as well as operate from an ambush.

In the course of the battle the officer commanding the first detachment, skilfully moving fire, using obstacles and coordinating with adjacent units, must prevent the enemy from penetrating the gaps between the strongpoints and, especially, from seizing the occupied position from the march. The division units fall back to the subsequent lines and

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positions of the forward security zone after the subunits disengage in company and platoon columns. This withdrawal must be covered by artillery fire, obstacles, and tanks firing from ambush. In night conditions most of the regiment (division) forces can make a simultaneous disengagement from the enemy under cover of tank fire.

At the last position of the forward security zone, the withdrawing units, with the air and artillery support from the main forces, must steadfastly repulse the attack from the march of the first echelon of enemy divisions, force them to stop, and prepare a repeat attack. Only in this case will troops operating in the forward security zone completely fulfill their task and be able to fall back to the depth of defense on command.

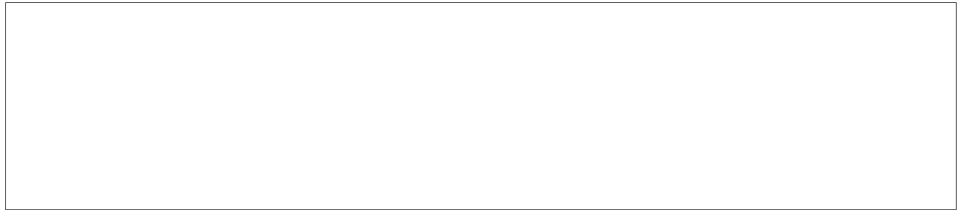
When planning the troop withdrawal from the forward security zone to the depth of defense of the main forces, the army and division commanders must determine in advance the axes of movement of units and subunits, using favorable terrain conditions, and organize the cover of the withdrawal by the fire means deployed in the main zone of defense. In this period it is highly important not to permit the enemy to break through right after the withdrawing troops toward the forward edge of the defending troops. This requires specially assigning engineer subunits to construct obstacles on the approaches immediately after completing the troop withdrawal. Defensive artillery fire is prepared on the axes of withdrawal, as are the flank and crossfire of tanks and antitank means.

It is most desirable that the units of the division and the forward detachments pull back behind the forward edge of the battle area from the last position of the forward security zone after the enemy has conducted preparatory fire at this position, since an earlier withdrawal might be noticed and the advantage of having a security zone would be lost.

A complex situation in which to conduct combat operations in the forward security zone can arise as a result of enemy airborne forces landing and capturing a line to which the pullback was previously contemplated. If the line occupied by the enemy is important to the defending forces from a tactical or operational standpoint it is necessary to organize the destruction of this landing force by the forces of troops operating in the forward security zone, and in a number of cases by subunits from the main zone.

Direct control of the forward detachments during a battle in the forward security zone is effected by the commanders of the divisions from which they have been sent. When a motorized rifle or tank division is sent

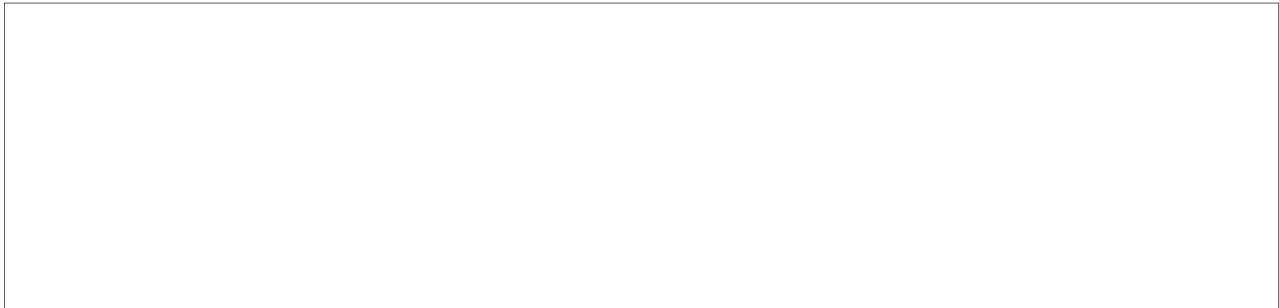
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out to an army forward security zone, its activities are controlled by the army commander. In all cases the army commander, through the division commanders, coordinates and directs the efforts of the forward detachments in accordance with the overall concept of the defensive operation.

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